

7. MARINE RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

Marine resources play an important role in Bucksport's economy. The harbor facilities serve both recreational and commercial users. The waterfront attracts visitors and is also enjoyed by many residents.

State Goal: To protect the State's marine resources industry, ports and harbors from incompatible development and to promote access to the shore for commercial fishermen and the public.

OVERVIEW / MILL CLOSURE EFFECTS

The paper mill was an outstanding feature of the Bucksport waterfront for over eight decades. Water transport options were there for both feedstock and final product. Potential development of a major port in Bucksport for a broad range of uses may never have been more promising than it is now.



Located on the eastern shore of the Penobscot River approximately 6.5 miles from the ocean, Bucksport has a deep water harbor which, in recent years, ranked third in the State based on total tonnage handled. Historically, Ocean-going vessels called at the port several times a week to discharge petroleum and liquid sulfur. A Maine Central Railroad line (now owned by Guilford Transportation), serves the waterfront. Good highway connections, including Routes 15 and 1, tie Bucksport to the Bangor area, as well as locations up and down the coast and inland. Oil for much of Northern Maine has been received at Bucksport and transported by truck to points north.

Fishing has played only a minor role in the town's economy even since before the waters were closed for lobster and crab harvesting due to mercury contamination. The town's marine infrastructure primarily supports industrial and recreational activities.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ★ Bucksport has made many significant improvements to its public waterfront since the last Plan including Veteran's Memorial Park, a walkway extension and a sculpture.
- ★ Further upgrades could include more parking, dock and float space and better pedestrian connections between the waterfront walkway and the Main Street area.
- ★ Other proposals for the area include dredging the harbor and a new mooring plan.
- ★ The marina was acquired by the town in 2014 to enhance its services and visibility.
- ★ A water taxi service to Fort Knox could enhance efforts to boost tourism.
- ★ Water quality in the river has improved, but needs more attention to reach goals.

ANALYSIS

Water Quality

The Penobscot River was used intensively by industrial, municipal wastewater and other purposes for many years. A boon for local economies and convenience became a burden to the river and bay downstream. More recent efforts by Federal and State authorities as well as independent groups have made notable progress in the clean-up of the waterway. Public and private agencies continue to study the ongoing issues with the goal of restoring health to fisheries and vibrancy to recreational and economic opportunities.

Is coastal water quality being monitored on a regular basis?

Is there a local or regional plan in place to identify and eliminate pollution sources?

Some organizations have compiled relevant information that is available online:

Friends of Penobscot Bay: <http://www.eastern.penbay.org>

Penobscot East Resource Center: <http://www.penobscoteast.org>

The Penobscot River Restoration Project: <http://www.penobscotriver.org>

The Penobscot River Mercury Study 2006-2007

<http://www.maine.gov/dep/spills/holtrachem/penobriver/phase1report.pdf>

The Penobscot River Mercury Study 2009 update:

http://www.maine.gov/dep/spills/holtrachem/penobriver/penobrivermercurystudy_phase_I_update_report_july_2009_part%201.pdf

Some other testing of the river and bay waters has been performed by the EPA, the University of Maine and the University of New Hampshire. Results of this testing may be made available when obtained. The town has worked with the Maine DEP to address pollution sources. There is more on that in the Water Resources Chapter.

All of Bucksport's waters have been closed to shell fish harvesting since 2013 due to bacterial contamination. The primary source of contamination within Bucksport is the discharge from the sewer system. The town would have to find an alternative means of discharge in order to remove this source. As of February 2014, the waters were also closed to lobster and crab harvesting due to unsafe levels of mercury originating beyond the town boundaries.

Has closing of clam or worm flats threatened the shellfishing industry, and are sources of contamination known? If so, are sources point (direct discharge) or nonpoint sources?



The town pier, marina and waterfront walkway at Bucksport Harbor along the Penobscot River Estuary northeast of Verona Island.

Commercial Fishing

The town dock (described below) was used by commercial fisherman until the closing of the town's waters to lobster and crab harvesting in 2014. While this closure may be rescinded in the future, the commercial fishing sector in Bucksport has a minor impact on the economy. DMR data (see Table 7.1) show that were a total of 39 marine fishing licenses issued to Bucksport residents. Only a portion of these licenses were for commercial lobster or crab harvesting. The licenses are issued by place of residence rather than the harbor used. All license holders presently fish out of town. Based on historical trends, commercial fishing is likely to remain a relatively small part of waterfront activity.

Are traditional water-dependent uses thriving or in decline? What are the factors affecting these uses? If current trends continue, what will the waterfront look like in 10 years?

Table 7.1 Marine Licenses, Bucksport Residents 2013

Type	Number
Commercial shellfish	5
Elver-2 fyke nets	1
Elver-dip net	2
Lobster/crab non-commercial	10
Lobster/crab class i	3
Lobster/crab class ii	5
Lobster/crab class iii	2
Lobster/crab over age 70	1
Lobster/crab student	3
Marine worm digging	6
Scallop, non-commercial	1
Total	39
SOURCE: Maine Department of Marine Resources	



The "Center of the Known Universe", a sculpture, a recreational fishing pier, a veteran's memorial park, more parking and a waterfront walkway extension were all added since the 2003 Plan.

Waterfront Development

There is a mixture of recreational, commercial, industrial, and recreational uses along the waterfront and the immediately adjacent areas. This means that the needs of each group of users must be addressed in a coordinated manner to avoid conflict. Specific problems and needs are discussed below.

Is there reasonable balance between water-dependent and other uses, and between commercial and recreational uses? If there have been recent conversions of uses, have they improved or worsened the balance?

Zoning

The boundaries of districts are shown on the Bucksport Zoning Map (2 sheets). There are three shoreland zoning district that regulate the harbor area. Portions are zoned as Commercial Fisheries Maritime Activities (CFMA) District. This district designates areas suitable for the development of functionally water-dependent commercial and recreational uses fronting on the Penobscot River. This zoning appears adequate to preserve the current mixture of uses.

*How does local zoning treat land around the harbor?
Is there a local or regional harbor or bay management plan?
If not, is one needed?*

Other parts of the waterfront are zoned Downtown Shoreland. The zoning ordinance describes this district as an “area suitable for a dense development of a variety of businesses fronting Main Street on its southerly side and some fronting on the northerly side of Main Street that are within 250 feet of the shoreline of Penobscot River. It is also suitable for businesses operating from the shore side of buildings or properties on the southerly side of Main Street.

The Industry Development Shoreland Overlay district includes existing, intensively developed areas of two more contiguous acres devoted to commercial or industrial activities. This zone allows the high intensity industrial operations to continue.

Harbor Planning

There are outstanding issues that need to be addressed through harbor planning. These include parking, dredging, and updating the mooring plan. The marina needs additional floats and docking space. These plans should be coordinated with Main Street improvements. The waterfront walkway needs additional signage and other measures to connect it with downtown sidewalks. The harbor plan should also address two issues in adjoining towns. The first is the boat launching ramp on Verona Island. This facility is used by most of the boaters who visit or are based on the Bucksport waterfront. It needs a floating dock system. The second issue is the proposed water taxi between Fort Knox and Bucksport. This would involve coordinated dock improvements in both Prospect and Bucksport.

The harbor requires major dredging. Certain areas adjacent to the marina now have a full-moon low-tide depth of about four and one-half feet. Some of the boat slips inside the marina are not usable due to accumulation of deposits. Dredging needs to be part of the harbor improvement plan.

Are there local dredging needs? If so, how will they be addressed?

There is inadequate parking adjacent to the marina. This situation is likely to worsen if the marina is expanded. The problem might be mitigated through directional signage to the parking area and restricting the duration of parking in certain areas near the marina to loading and unloading of goods and passengers.

Is there adequate access, including parking? Are there opportunities for improved access?

Key scenic views are discussed in the Natural Resources chapter and are summarized in Table 9.1. Of the seven views listed, two overlook saltwater. One is a view of Fort Knox and the other of the Penobscot River. Both are protected in places by public ownership.

Are important points of visual access identified and protected? A list of scenic resources along the shoreline, including current ownership (public or private) and any protections

Fishing plays a minor role in the town's economy. This was the case even before the waters were closed for lobster and crab harvesting due to mercury contamination. Rather, the town's marine infrastructure primarily supports industrial and recreational activities.

CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Overview: Bucksport is a south-facing river port overlooking the Penobscot River Estuary north of Penobscot Bay. The harbor is fairly well protected from storm surge. The average mean low water is 47 feet. The approach to the port can be difficult due to heavy tides and swift current. The port has a mud and hard bottom with mostly light siltation, and a tidal range of nine to eleven feet. The port now acts as a customs station. One recurring problem is that drift ice coming down the river does not reach the open sea before the tide changes. As a result, the port often freezes over. The major waterfront facilities are summarized in the following paragraphs.

The location of facilities (wharves, boat ramps, pump-out stations, etc.), with a brief description of any regional or local plans to improve facilities.

Town-owned facilities

The town dock is 310 feet long and has 80 feet of finger floats. The ramp to the floats is ADA compliant. While there are no records on the number of users, dock is very busy during most of the summer months. Sixty feet of dock was added in 2014 to allow recreational boaters to use the facility while cruise ships are also using the facility.

The Bucksport Marina is about 100 feet from the town dock. Customers are able to purchase seasonal or transient slips to dock their vessel while in town. The Marina has a locked security fence shore-side and has approximately 40 slips with vessels generally ranging up to 40 feet. The facility has electric and water hook ups, public pump-out service, wi-fi and gasoline. As mentioned above, parking is inadequate and it needs additional floats and docking space.

The small boat and fishing dock is located down-river in the east channel, about 2,200 feet from the town dock. This facility is grounded out at low water. It is suitable for launching small canoes and kayaks.

Private facilities

Webber dock serves tankers and barges with lengths over 500 feet and drafts up to 33 feet that dock and unload petroleum products. This dock is located less than 500 feet from the town dock. The former Verso Paper Company dock is located upriver next to the Webber dock and 2,000 feet from the town dock. This dock is generally used by the

state of Maine Department of Environmental Protection's 150-foot, 5,000-barrel, oil recovery barge and one or two tug boats.



The mill site, the Webber Dock (formerly called Sprague South) and the extended town pier form the western end of the town harbor.

State facilities

Verona Island boat landing is a state-owned boat launching ramp facility located in the east channel on Verona Island at 1,950 feet from the town dock. Access to the launch ramp by vehicle is from an access road next to the Bucksport-Verona Island bridge off Route 1.

A description or map showing public access points to the shore. Include a brief description of their use, capacity, physical condition, and plans to improve, expand, or acquire facilities such as parking or toilets.

Moorings

There are currently ten permitted moorings in Bucksport harbor with 70 total available mooring spaces. There is no waiting list and the number of mooring spaces is adequate for the current demand. By contrast, the 2003 plan reported that the town issued an average of 32 mooring permits each year. It was estimated that eighty percent were then used for recreational purposes and twenty percent for commercial uses. The town's management of the marina has begun to see increased demand for space and services. Additional moorings are possible with harbor dredging. A new mooring plan would be recommended.



Moored boats in Bucksport Harbor as seen in this 2006 USDA aerial photo.

The State-owned Verona Island boat ramp can be seen at the bottom right.



Views from the waterfront walkway include Verona Island, The bridge, the fort, tugs and ships.